



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Sharon Weaver February 2018 Artist Member of the Month

What is your #1 tip or advice for the beginning plein air painter?

Simplify. Painting outdoors can be overwhelming so remember to reduce everything to simple shapes. Don't try to paint every leaf; instead paint the shapes of the shadows and highlights. You can squint at a scene or do what I do. For the first hour or so I take off my glasses, which forces me to see only the simplest of shapes, not the details. I learned that from a Kevin Macpherson video.

If you could only have 5 colors on your palette, what would they be?

Color is so subjective and personal. I like to have a warm and a cool of each primary on my palette, but if I had to choose only five, my picks would be a combination of proven staples and two unorthodox colors. Ultramarine Blue, Emerald Green (great for water and turquoise skies), Cadmium Orange (I mix it with so much to make pretty neutrals), Yellow Ochre, Alizarin Crimson, and Titanium White.

Why do you choose to paint in the wild plein air rather than in the controlled environment of the studio?

Early in my painting career I was very lucky to be juried into the Carmel Art Festival, a plein air event. Painting plein air every day from sunrise to sunset for that show really pushed my skills. I soon realized that there were colors in the landscape that I never saw in photos. The learning curve was dramatic. I learned more in one week of painting plein air than I would have by painting in the studio for a year.

What was your most hair-raising extreme plein air painting experience?

I remember one instance when a stranger saved me from broken bones. I set up my easel on a levee at the edge of the Pacific Ocean. I got so involved in painting that I forgot that there wasn't anything behind me but a drop off into the rocks. Luckily, I was talking to a gentleman about my painting when I backed up to get some perspective of my work. As I started to slip over the edge, he grabbed my arm and saved me from falling.

Living or not, which artist(s) has had the most impact on your artistic journey?

All the California Impressionists have had a major impact on my work. Seeing artists' work in person is a very powerful experience and reverberates in my own painting for years. The Edgar Payne show at PMCA was

very influential. Also Joaquin Sorolla at SDMA a few years back is still influencing me today. Living artists would include Carl Dempwolf, who was my first plein air teacher, Matt Smith, a master at painting rocks, and Clyde Aspevig, pure genius.

Any closing comments or advice you'd like to share?

If possible paint from life. It is the best way to learn about values, composition and colors. It can take years to figure out how to paint from a photo and have it look spontaneous and alive. Only those artists who understand how to paint from life can go into the studio and do it well.